

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough review of the present application, and respectfully request reconsideration in light of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-20 are pending in the application. Claims 1-3 have been amended only to improve claim language. Claims 4-5 have been amended to avoid the Examiner's *35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph* rejection. The original claims remain substantively unchanged notwithstanding the Examiner's art rejections. New claims 6-20 have been added to provide Applicants with the scope of protection to which they are believed entitled. The Abstract has been revised to be compliant with commonly accepted US patent practice. No new matter has been introduced through the foregoing amendments.

The *35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph* rejection of claims 4-5 is noted. Although Applicants do not agree with the Examiner's holding that claims 4-5 are indefinite because the phrase "at least two of said rows" lacks antecedent basis, amendments have nevertheless been made to avoid the Examiner's rejection.

The art rejections of claims 1-5 as being obvious over *Bauer* (U.S. Patent No. 5,934,470) in view of *WO 02/096333* are noted. The rejections are deemed inappropriate because *WO 02/096333* is not prior art to the present invention.

WO 02/096333 is not prior art under *35 U.S.C. 102(a)* or *(b)* because its publication date of December 5, 2002 postdates the priority date of the instant application, i.e., October 18, 2002. The certified copy of the priority document has been submitted in the Office as acknowledged by the Examiner in the Summary page of the Office Action. Applicants submit herewith a sworn English translation of the priority document in order to perfect the priority claim in the instant application.

WO 02/096333 does not have a 35 U.S.C. 102(e) date because it was not published in English. See *MPEP*, section 706.02(f)(1), Example 5.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that *WO 02/096333* is not prior art to the present invention, and cannot be relied upon in an art rejection against the claims of the instant application. Withdrawal of the art rejections relying on *WO 02/096333* is now believed appropriate and therefore courteously solicited.

New independent claims 6 and 16 are patentable over the other cited references because the references do not fairly teach or suggest the claim feature that transversely opposite lateral portions of the crotch region are folded inwardly along a pair of folding lines wherein each of said folding lines includes two branches extending from a middle zone of said crotch region upwardly towards the front and rear regions, respectively.

Claims 7-15 and 17-20 depend from claim 6 or 16, and are considered patentable at least for the reason advanced with respect to claims 6 and 16.

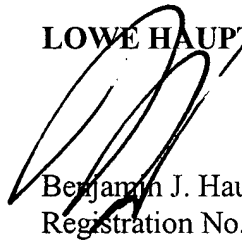
Each of the Examiner's rejections has been traversed/overcome. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are now in condition for allowance. Early and favorable indication of allowance is courteously solicited.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned, Applicant's attorney of record, to facilitate advancement of the present application.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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